



**Written by people
living with diabetes,
for people living
with diabetes.**



Thank you for ordering this book. What you have in your hands is a collection of the most useful tips for living with diabetes written by the people who know best – people with diabetes and their families.

When we asked for your suggestions on eating out, exercising, going on holiday and a whole host of other situations, we thought we'd be happy with a few hundred tips. We received over 1,100.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to send in suggestions and I'm sorry if yours didn't make it into the book. We received so many tips – and sometimes the same from several people – which goes to show just how useful these tips are.

As Chief Executive of Diabetes UK, bringing together people with all kinds of experiences of diabetes to share their knowledge with others has been wonderful. I hope you enjoy reading this book as much as we enjoyed making it.

Thank you.



Chris Askew, Chief Executive, Diabetes UK



Guide to icons

Diabetes is unique to everyone affected by it, and we all manage the condition in different ways. The tips in this book are relevant to people with all types of diabetes and, to help you identify those that might be most useful to you, we've included these icons where relevant.

-  Tips for parents

-  Tips for medication

-  Tips for pregnancy

-  Tips for insulin users

Contents





We know keeping on top of healthy eating and exercise with diabetes is easier said than done.

So these tips are full of suggestions that really help, like how to enjoy a drink safely with diabetes, how to exercise without hitting the gym and how to eat out without the usual hassle. Bon appétit.



Food & Exercise



Tip 1

Buy a set of good digital scales to weigh your carbs – more accurate measurements mean you can have the right amount of insulin and hopefully less hypos¹ and hypers². 🍴 +

Nicola, 36, from Redditch, whose insulin pump changed her life.



Tip 2

I'm not a gym person! For me, going for a 30-minute walk with my hubby after dinner is the best. Because you're talking, you don't realise how far you've walked and you can get a good workout without realising.

Urmila, 50, from Slough.



Tip 3

If, like me, you really must have chocolate, buy a quality bar with a high cocoa content, break it into squares and store it in your fridge or freezer. Then when you really want some, help yourself to a square. Because it's cold it will take longer to melt in your mouth.

Noel, 61, from Belfast, who was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes 13 years ago.



Tip 4

Mashed cauliflower and leeks with a little butter is a lower-carb alternative to mashed potatoes. It's the same texture and tastes great on pies!

Sarah, 23, from London, who was diagnosed with Type 1 in February 2015.



The snack challenge: put as many foods on your plate that add up to 10 grams of carbs in total. We made this game up to help my daughter find out the carb content of different foods. This has helped her look at carbs in foods in a fun way and the whole family can join in. 📱

Joanne, 46, from Clacton-on-Sea, whose daughter was diagnosed when she was five.



If you're going out for dinner with family or friends with diabetes, it's helpful to pick a restaurant where they can have a quick look at the menu online first. And try to pick somewhere that gives you all options – if they're trying to go easy on the carbs, don't plump for a restaurant that only serves pizza!

TV presenter Phillip Schofield whose brother and mother both have Type 1 diabetes.



Exercise can be made a regular routine through dog walking – but make sure that the breed of dog is one which allows you to walk at a good pace and a reasonable distance – a toy breed will not do!

Geoff, 79, from Liverpool, who manages his diabetes through exercise and diet.

Tip 5

Tip 6

Tip 7

^{1,2} See 'Notes on the tips' at the back of the book.

Food & Exercise



Tip
8

If you enjoy baking, but want to cut back on the amount of sugar you're using, try using fresh or dried fruit, like bananas or raisins, to add extra sweetness without the added sugar.

Si King, one half of the Hairy Bikers, whose wife and son have diabetes. He's also a dab hand at carb-conscious cooking.



Photo: Andrew Hayes Watkins

Tip
9

Avoid soft drinks from pumps. Too many times have I been given a full sugar drink by mistake. Opt for bottled drinks so you can see the label and make sure it's sugar free.

Claire, 44, from Lincoln.



 Tip
10

I never realised how much exercise helps with looking after my diabetes and taking away the negativity. I joined a gym and now I go twice a week on my own and it helps me feel great.

Pete, 62, from Havant, who goes to the gym to relieve stress.



Tip
11

Check your blood glucose before brushing your teeth at night in case you need a bedtime snack.

Leslie, 66, from Hemel Hempstead, who was diagnosed with Type 1 in 2013.



When you freeze a meal you have prepared, write the carbohydrate contents on the bag or container.

Sue, 61, from Taunton, says diabetes seemed complicated at first but now it's part of life.

Encourage your child to exercise, play sports and let their diabetes management fit around it. With planning and care, anything's possible – my daughter often travels the world alone despite having Type 1 diabetes. 

Suzanne from Essex.



Don't be afraid to inject at the table when eating out. I have friends who go to the toilet to inject so no one will see, even though it's unhygienic. Who cares what other people think and it may actually help to raise awareness.  

Kathryn, 34, from St Ives, who has Type 1 and is a mum to two toddlers.



Find exercise that works for you – something you enjoy. I love swimming, it's my peace and quiet time.

Carol, 59, from Hereford, whose parents had diabetes too.

Tip
12

Tip
13 

Tip
14

Tip
15

Food & Exercise



Tip 16

When drinking shorts like rum and Coke, always double-check whether your mixer is diet or full sugar. The alcohol can disguise the sweet taste of a full sugar mixer, so you might unknowingly raise your blood sugar.

Nigel, 59, from Dursley, who says he's found a strict routine has stabilised his blood sugars.



Tip 17



Ask to be referred to a dietitian – they're invaluable in helping you make the right decisions about your diet, and helping to avoid more problems in later life.

Lynne, 62, from London, who says dietitian support has helped her granddaughter so much.



Tip 18

Low fat foods like yogurts can sometimes be higher in sugar, so always check the ingredients on the label.

Margaret, 71, from Reading, who was diagnosed with Type 2 last year.



Tip 19

Try to prepare and cook everything yourself from fresh ingredients. That way, you know what you're eating.

Keith, 70, from London, who was diagnosed with Type 2 three years ago.



When exercising, test before, during (if possible) and after. See how exercise affects your levels to help you adjust your control for next time. Bear in mind when you have last eaten and injected as this will impact how quickly your blood glucose can change.

Choose snacks such as dried apricots to help maintain your blood glucose levels during exercise and keep plenty of fluids close by.

Some types of exercise will lower your blood glucose, some will actually raise it. This is why testing is so important! 📏 +

Chris Pennell, Worcester Warriors and England rugby player, who says having diabetes gave him a challenge and ultimately made him a stronger person and a better player.



Having diabetes doesn't mean you have to stop drinking completely³. You'll find some drinks that don't mess with your sugars too much – mine's wine :-). But cider and beer send my sugars crazy high! Just take time to check your sugars while drinking and still have fun. Also, monitor your sugars the day after!

Sarah, 30, from Bristol, who was diagnosed in her second year of uni.

Tip 20

Tip 21

³ See 'Notes on the tips' at the back of the book.



Star Tip
22

To avoid steep sugar highs when eating carbs like pasta, cook first then either refrigerate for an hour or freeze. Then reheat and consume – sugar spikes will be much lower.

Tahir, 53, from Bradford, who has been Type 2 insulin dependent for 24 years. He says he exercises regularly and particularly enjoys swimming.



Becca, who has Type 1, recently told us “never turn down an opportunity for adventure just because you’re diabetic”. Living with diabetes should never hold you back, whether you’re popping down the road or travelling around the world.

The tips in this section can help you plan for holidays, deal with emergencies out of home and even help you recognise the word ‘carbohydrate’ in 10 languages.





Star Tip
31

Look up the local word for 'carbohydrate' before you travel – this will help you read the food labels correctly. Glucide in French and Węglowodany in Polish, for example.

Here are a few more:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| French = glucide | Chinese = 碳水化合物 (taan3 seoi2 faa3 hap6 mat6) |
| Polish = węglowodany | Japanese = 炭水化物 (Tansuikabutsu) |
| Spanish = carbohidrato | Turkish = karbonhidrat |
| Italian = carboidrato | Greek = υδατάνθρακας (ydatánthrakes) |
| Portugese = carboidrato | Croatian = ugljikohidrat |

Mark, 54, from Beckenham, who has Type 1, and whose mother had Type 2 and lost the feeling in her legs. He knows how important it is for him to stay in control of his diabetes.

Travel & Driving



Tip 32



If there are any changes in your condition which could affect your ability to drive, let the DVLA know. Don't forget, some complications of diabetes might qualify you for Motability allowance so it's always worth checking if your condition changes.

Mary, 67, from Wrexham, who has had complications but is fit and well today.



Make sure you get a doctor's note/medical certificate before you go on hols and, when you get to the airport, tell people up front that you've got meds in your handbag to save time and hassle. +

Roberta, 68, from Hereford, who has lived with the condition for 23 years.

Tip 36

Tip 33

Spread your medication and equipment across all the people you're travelling with – that way you're covered even if luggage is lost or delayed. +

Shona, 60, from Weymouth, who diagnosed her husband when she was working as a Nurse Practitioner.



If you're travelling long distances and crossing many time zones, plan ahead and work out when you are likely to be eating, so that you can adjust your medication accordingly. Always keep something suitable to eat with you at all times. 🍴 +

Jane, who has Type 2.

Tip 37



Tip 34



If you're at a festival, it can take forever to get out of crowds so keep plenty of diabetes supplies on you in a small bag. It's also worth hiring a locker for additional diabetes supplies if you go for the weekend. +

Adele, 19, from Manchester.



Always ring the airline – some of them allow you free extra hand luggage allowance for diabetes supplies. +

Nicky, 41, from Southport, whose 13-year-old daughter has had Type 1 for seven years.

Tip 38

Tip 35

If you're holidaying in the mountains, remember that altitude can impact your insulin requirements for the first few days at least. 🍴 +

Robin, 60, from Charlbury, who has had Type 1 for 10 years.



If you're going on a boozy holiday, don't forget to set your alarm to remind you to take long lasting insulin. It's easy to get carried away and forget. 🍴 +

Kate, 23, who has Type 1.

Tip 39





Star Tip
40

If you're away from home in the UK and you need emergency diabetes supplies, a pharmacist in a local chemist may be able to supply your regular medication.⁴ 

Jan, 67, from Gloucester, who has had Type 2 for over 25 years. She says using seven-day tablet dispensers help her keep on top of her medication.

⁴ See 'Notes on the tips' at the back of the book.



Travel & Driving



Tip
41

Blood glucose meters and test strips can be affected by low temperatures. If you're somewhere cold, store your tester inside your clothes to keep it warmer.

Morag, 39, from Glasgow, who was diagnosed with MODY 13 years ago.



Tip
42

Take a copy of your prescription with you on holiday – it's useful in case you lose your medication or need more. It's also useful to have at the airport to quickly show staff what you're taking if they ask you.

Marnie from Newbury.

Tip
43

When you're travelling or going on holiday, double up on the amount of supplies you need, split them across two bags and ALWAYS keep a hand on them. (Both of our daysacks fell out the back of a Tuk-Tuk in India just before a 15-hour train ride!)

Kev, 46, from Horton Heath, whose daughter is a great advocate for using an insulin pump.



Save space when you go on holiday – use a small plastic bottle like a vitamin pill bottle to put your discarded sharps in whilst you're away. Then when you're home you can dispose of them as you normally would.

Rob, 23, from London, who has Type 1.



Instead of wearing an insulin pump poolside, in your swimwear, simply bolus your basal rate every hour and keep it in your beach bag inside a Frio cool wallet to protect it from the heat.⁵

Alyson, 42, from Leicester, who was diagnosed with Type 1 aged 26.

In case of emergencies, always carry a notebook or phrase book with key phrases in the language of the country you're visiting.

Annette, 58, from Bangor, who has Type 2 and uses insulin to manage her diabetes.

When you're flying, never store insulin in the hold of the plane. It could freeze and become deactivated. Always keep it on board with you.

Lee-Anne from Northern Ireland, who has Type 1.

Tip
44

Tip
45

Tip
46

Tip
47

⁵ See 'Notes on the tips' at the back of the book.



Telling people at work, university or school about how diabetes affects you or a loved one isn't 'making a fuss', it's simply good preparation and can be of real benefit.

In this section, you'll find tips for keeping your child's school up to date with their diabetes as well as how your workplace, school or university can offer you practical help and support.



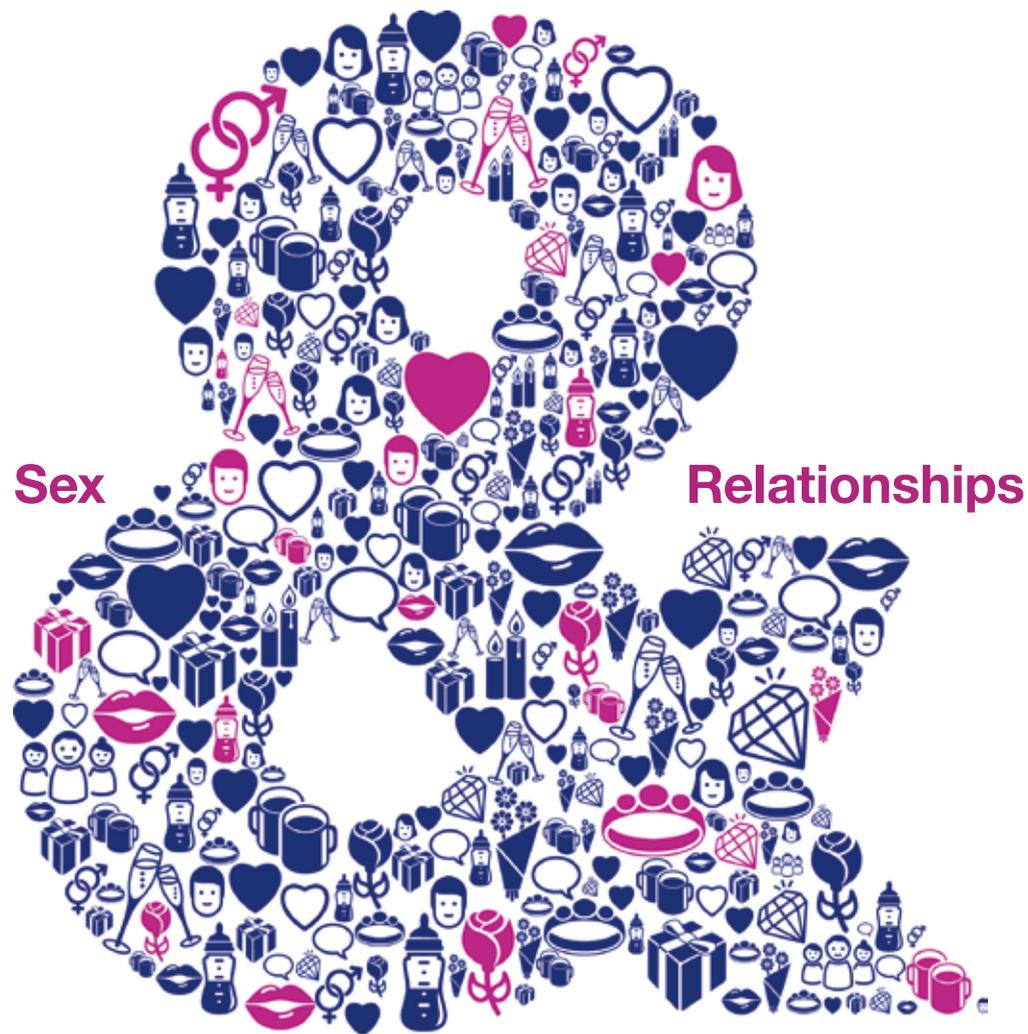


Star Tip
63

Be patient when bouncers try to throw away your sugary drink because they don't understand it's to treat a hypo (taking a sealed bottle rather than an open one helps with this). Be patient when transferring diabetes care and the new doctors/hospital do things differently. Be patient when you have to go out of your way to repeatedly make diabetes-related enquiries to get what you need. Be patient when you feel alone and different. With a bit of positivity and effort, you can overcome whatever life throws at you.

Adele, 19, from Manchester, who has had Type 1 for 10 years.





These subjects can be the trickier ones to deal with. It was great to receive so many good suggestions for tackling them head on.

From avoiding naked hypos to talking diabetes with partners, family and friends, this section can help you with the emotional and physical impact diabetes can have on all kinds of relationships.



Sex & Relationships



Tip
64

It's really important to plan having a family when you have diabetes – talk to your Diabetes Specialist Nurse way before you try for a baby and get all the information that's out there. It could make all the difference.

Abbie, 37, from Swindon, who has Type 1 and a four-year-old daughter.



Diabetes doesn't mean the end of your sex life. If you have erectile dysfunction⁹, seek help, use toys and be inventive – sex could be even better than before!

Kevin, 72, from London, who was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes 10 years ago.

Tip
68



Tip
65

You can get help from your GP if you have erectile problems. You'll be surprised how much help is available – so don't abstain, keep it maintained!

Ray, 67, from Caerphilly, who was diagnosed with Type 2 in 1998.



If you wear an insulin pump, attach it to a sexy garter at night and it won't get in the way of nocturnal activities.

Debbie, 44, from Cardiff, who was diagnosed at the age of 38.

Tip
69

Tip
66

Naked hypos aren't fun, so make sure you and your partner know where the hypo treatment is. Diabetes doesn't have to ruin the spontaneous moment.

Sandie, 33, from Merseyside, who was diagnosed with Type 1 when she was eight.



Always have something sweet by your bed for those unexpected sex antics! Having low blood sugar stops me having an orgasm – and that's rubbish!

Sarah, 30, from Bristol.

Tip
70



Tip
67

Stay away from chocolate body paint; it's expensive, revolting and can push your blood sugars up.

Molly, from Hampshire, who is living with Type 1.



It's a good idea to have a snack handy while you're breastfeeding. If your blood glucose is low, you might not produce as much milk.

Lucy, 32, from Workington, who has an insulin pump and says it has had a positive impact on her life.

Tip
71

⁹ See 'Notes on the tips' at the back of the book.

Sex & Relationships



Tip
72

Never be worried about telling a potential partner you're diabetic. If they don't like it, they aren't worth keeping.

Abbie, 20, from Preston, who has had diabetes for two years.



Tip
73

When my husband was ill, I didn't know how to do his blood sugar readings, so I started going to all of his appointments so I knew what to do. My advice is go with your partner to all their appointments and find out as much as you can about their condition.

Molly, 77, from Southbourne, whose husband has diabetes.

Tip
74

Diabetes affects you mentally as well as physically. Talking about your feelings with others can really help you deal with the condition.

Phoebe, 23, from Stamford.



Tip
75

If you wear an insulin pump, disconnect it before sex to prevent your partner accidentally pulling it out – ouch! 🚫 +

Emma, 29, who is living with Type 1.

Men with diabetes are more likely to get thrush so it's important to keep your bits clean, especially after sex. Use a thrush cream if you need to.

Neil, 43, who has Type 2.



We've all tried to ignore a hypo in the heat of passion. Don't bother. Nothing goes up until your bloods go up.

Stephen Dixon, Sky News presenter who says he's proud of being a diabetic. He says it's a key part of his life and identity and something that he embraces and owns.

Tip
76 ♂

Tip
77

Ask your midwife to help you get in touch with a buddy – someone else who's also experiencing gestational diabetes¹⁰. It really helps to talk to someone going through the same thing. 🗣️

Wendy, 42, from Hertfordshire, who was diagnosed with gestational diabetes when she was 16 weeks pregnant.

Tip
78 ♀♀



If you don't know something about your diabetes or your partner's, just ask. There's no shame in it.

Bethany, 19, from Royston, whose boyfriend and his mum are both Type 1.

Tip
79

¹⁰ See 'Notes on the tips' at the back of the book.



Star Tip
80

My husband and I have an agreement: if he thinks I'm having a hypo, I test myself immediately with no arguments, even if I think I'm fine. Most of the time he's right!

Melissa, 42, from Ongar, who says she's a great believer in further education about diabetes management. In her experience, courses for diabetes management can be life-changing.

Life & Living



Tip
81

If you need to stay in hospital for any reason, make sure you tell them that you have diabetes and that they record how you manage the condition on hospital charts. Your diabetes might not be clearly stated on your records, especially if you control it through diet and exercise alone.



While you're entitled to good diabetes care in hospital, please remember that not all staff are diabetes specialists. If you can, it's always best to keep an eye on your treatment and blood sugar levels. **+**

Bridget, 46, from London, who has Type 1 and is Director of Policy and Care Improvement at Diabetes UK. She says that when she was in hospital, the Diabetes Specialist Nurse was a real help.



Tip
82

If you're offered a course like DAFNE, DESMOND or XPERT, go on it – it will change your life. I have been diabetic for 42 years but never had good control before attending the course.

Julia, 45, from Saffron Walden, who was diagnosed when she was three.

Tip
83

Sew a pocket into the inside of your child's clothes to hold an insulin pump in place – cheap and easy! **✂️ + 🧵**

Mick, 69, from Thornwick, who is Chairman of his local diabetes support group.



Before testing, wash your hands under warm water as this makes it easier to draw blood from your finger. **✂️ +**

Mick, 72, from Surrey, whose wife and mother-in-law both have diabetes.

I joined various Type 1 diabetes social media groups on Facebook. They provide brilliant support and a chance to vent and talk with like-minded people. Invaluable!

Deborah, 48, from Bath.



When testing your sugar levels, prick the side of your finger instead of your tip. Less nerve endings = less pain.

Chris, 57, from Verwood, who was diagnosed with Type 1 last year and is coping well so far.

Feet tend to swell up during the day so always buy shoes in the afternoon for a better fit.

Hazel, from Carlisle, who has Type 2.

Tip
84

Tip
85



Tip
86

Tip
87



Life & Living



Tip
88

Even on a dull day, take your sunglasses with you when you go for eye screening – the dilating eye drops will make your eyes extra sensitive to light for a few hours after.

Joycelyne, 54, from Brampton, who has Type 2.



Tip
91

Keep spare insulin pens, needles, test strips, hypo treatment and other essentials at your parents', siblings' and partner's houses. That way, you'll know you always have emergency supplies if you forget yours. 📍 + 📱

Catherine, 51, from Guildford, whose daughter is catching up on the social life she missed after diagnosis.



 Tip
89

Network! Whether online, on Twitter and Facebook, or face to face, a good network provides an amazing source of support and information from people going through the same experiences as you. They can be a lifeline at difficult times.

Jenni, 36, from Northallerton.

Don't feel guilty about your diagnosis. When I was first diagnosed, I felt in some way it was my fault. It was only when I overcame this feeling that I could take control of the condition.

Richard, 67, from Carlisle, who has Type 2.

Tip
92 

Tip
90

Test results are not a measure of your success or failure as a parent. Every test is an opportunity to help your child feel better. 📱

Pete, 42, from Beckenham, whose son Ben has had Type 1 since he was 17 months old.



Tip
93

Join diabetes groups and make friends – it's the easiest way to get the support you need when you're living with diabetes. I met my 'diabestie' this way and it makes life so much easier!

Taz, 24, from Cardiff.





Star Tip
100

We told our son that his insulin pump makes him bionic and pretty close to a real life superhero – he loved that! 🩺 + 🧑‍🦱

Lisa, 44, from Woking, whose son was diagnosed when he was just 20 months old. He was initially on injections but they quickly changed to the pump (as did her husband shortly after) which she says has just been the best thing.



Useful Services



Everyday diabetes

There can be so much to think about when you're living with diabetes, which is why we're here with helpful information, videos and more to help you manage diabetes in everyday life.

Eating well with diabetes. If you're looking for advice on what to eat, recipe ideas or helpful hints on getting the whole family involved in healthy eating, visit Enjoy Food online. It's packed full of helpful ideas and our expert nutritional information. Find out more and get your free Enjoy Food guide:

www.diabetes.org.uk/enjoyfood

Understanding your rights about diabetes at work, school or university, when you're driving or in relation to benefits is incredibly important. Our Advocacy team is here to help you.

Knowing your child's rights can help improve your child's experience at school. Our Care in School Helpline is run by trained volunteers who can provide you with rights-based information and support.

Expert information is always on hand when you need it. With our information-packed website, regular newsletters, leaflets and guides, we'll keep you up to date with information you can trust.

Notes on the tips

1. Hypo is short for hypoglycaemia and means having low blood glucose levels which can cause some people to lose concentration, feel shaky, tired, sweaty or a number of other symptoms.
2. Hyper is short for hyperglycaemia and refers to having high blood glucose levels. Hyper symptoms include feeling tired and very thirsty, having headaches and needing to go to the loo more often, especially at night.
3. Drinking alcohol can cause delayed hypos (either during the night or the next day). So, always have something to eat before you go to bed, like a bowl of cereal or some toast and have breakfast the next morning.
4. The pharmacist would need to feel satisfied that there is an immediate need for the medication and that the dose is correct – the decision would be at their discretion and you may have to pay for the medicine if you don't have a valid prescription.
5. If you want to try this, speak to your diabetes healthcare team about whether it's right for you.
6. A healthcare plan (usually a written document) is an agreement between you and the healthcare professional (and school staff in this case) to help manage your (or your child's) health day to day.
7. Diabetes UK doesn't advocate the use of recreational drugs of any kind. Anyone using drugs risks seriously damaging their health and they can also affect how you manage your diabetes. For further information, advice and support, talk to your healthcare team or contact **'Talk to Frank'** on **0300 123 6600**.
8. Some doctors may charge for this.
9. Erectile dysfunction (or impotence) is the inability to get and/or keep an erection.
10. Gestational diabetes is a type of diabetes that affects pregnant women, usually during the second or third trimester. You'll find more information at www.diabetes.org.uk/gestational
11. Fat atrophy is small fatty lumps that can develop under the skin if you keep injecting into the same site. By rotating injection sites you can help avoid getting these lumps.

Written by people living with diabetes,
for people living with diabetes.

Get in touch

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*The cost of calling 0345 numbers can vary according to the provider.
Calls may be recorded for quality and training purposes.

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